

## "The Moonlit Way"

WHEN we say that *The Moonlit Way* is another of Robert Chambers's luxurious novels of New York quite in accord with the others, with a few spies, Bolsheviks and international mixtures added for the sake of timeliness, we have said all that is necessary, but we wish to add a few remarks of our own. It would be cruel to divulge the plot because if you liked *The Common Law*, *The Fighting Chance* and *The Girl Philippa* you will like *The Moonlit Way*, and after all, this sort of drug is comparatively harmless.

Personally we find Mr. Chambers as sad a figure in a small way as there is in our literature. Having in remembrance his early novels and short stories, it is agonizing to read the gaudy froth that is his present métier. Having to read it, as we have, and having to do it more or less in

the public eye of subways and buses, our impulse was to go about it as secretly as could be with a widespread and covering hand for the incriminating title. When Mr. Chambers first assumed his later manner people felt that he was a struggling young author forced into alien fields by circumstances, but now, after fifty or so pot boilers, the pot must be boiling over and we grow impatient. There is such a thing as getting so hopelessly sidetracked that there is no getting back. But we wish to express our gratitude for one thing before leaving off. On page 186 of the present novel, in the midst of a studio scene between the hero and his young model, is to be found the only reasonable and definite use of the difficult words "perspiration" and "sweat" that has come to our attention:

"And Dulcie, poor child, what with being poised on the ball of one little foot

and with the other leg slung up in a padded loop, almost perished. *Perspiration* spangled her body like dew powdering the rose; *sweat* glistened on the features and shoulder bared arms of the impassioned sculptor, even blinding him at times."

It is a question of gender of course!

THE MOONLIT WAY. By ROBERT W. CHAMBERS. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.60.

## "Birds of a Feather" and "Above the Battles"

By W. B. McCORMICK.

WHEN France can evoke such a book as *Birds of a Feather*, by Marcel Nadaud, it is time to realize that she is passing from out of the strain of the war. Nadaud was an army aviator during the hostilities and was forced to retire from active service after receiving his third wound. He has written *En Plein Vol*, which was crowned by the French Academy, and *Chignole*, works that caused Maurice Donnay to style Nadaud "the winged writer." Neither of those books has been translated into English. But now we have *Birds of a Feather*, which is a continuation of the adventures of Chignole, a young man in whom breathes the very spirit of the Paris gamin. The tale, which must be a joy to read in French, tells of the adventures in the air and on solid ground of Chignole, Papa Charles, Flagada and Frangipane, aviators all. And there is also M. and Madame Bassinet, and Sophie, who becomes Chignole's wife. With the true Gallic touch Nadaud describes the comedies and tragedies in the lives of these four heroes, not the least of which tragedies is Chignole's return to civil life as a skilled mechanic in a factory. It is a long time since there has come to us from France so graceful and witty a volume as this; and not the least of the pleasures of reading it is that through its very airs of joyousness and merriment one feels the horrors of the last four years are already lifting from the land of our beloved and gallant ally.

In a recent review this reporter of books alluded to the fact that "war books" were entering their second phase, the stage in which military facts take on the form of imaginative fiction. A notable illustration of this development is to be found in *Above the Battles*, by C. H. A. André, which has been translated from the French by Mrs. Philip Duncan Wilson. The text is made up of thirty-eight episodes in the life of a French airman from the days immediately before war was declared in 1914. One feels, in reading these pages, that the return of France to something approaching its old normal life has brought back to her writers their old emotionalism; for Mr. André's narrative, which is set down as a personal one by an airman of the French army, is marked by that quality to a marked degree. The terrors of flying in a fog, of falling in an injured plane through the air, of death by fire and the execution of a spy, all of which are described with realism yet with a complete absence of such brutalities as marred the pages of *Le Fou*. After reading the biographies of such heroes of the air as Guynemer and Col. Bishop we always felt that fiction could never approach those records for wonder. In André's volume we have the proof that our judgment was sound. Interesting as these pages are they do not hold the same thrill as the actual narratives of the great French and great Canadian aviators.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER. By MARCEL NADAUD. Translated by Florence Converse. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.35. ABOVE THE BATTLES. By C. H. A. ANDRÉ. Translated by Mrs. Philip Duncan Wilson. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.50.

## Alexander Forbes's History of California

THE first important account of California written in English was Alexander Forbes's *California; a History of Upper and Lower California from Their First Discovery to the Present Time*. The "present time" was about 1839, when Smith, Elder & Company of London published the book. As the original is so rare as to be beyond the means of collectors not very rich, a San Francisco publisher, Mr. Thomas C. Russell, has issued a reprint of 250 numbered and registered copies. It is a credit to American bookmaking. The paper is fine, the type large and set by hand and the margins broad. It is not a facsimile copy of the original, for the publisher has corrected obvious errors, such as the spelling of Latin scientific names; but the page for

page plan has been adhered to except where Mr. Russell found an offensive division of a word at the end of a page.

Mr. Russell's work (we almost forget Alexander Forbes in our admiration for his new publisher) is so well done that it may be an inspiration to other American publishers. More reprints like this, and particularly of some books like Forbes's *California*, ought to be welcome in the libraries of those who concern themselves with authentic American history.

CALIFORNIA. By ALEXANDER FORBES. San Francisco: Thomas C. Russell. \$7.50.

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